

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 08166 070951Z

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1449

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 8166

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (LOWENSTEIN, JAMES) PINT, IT

SUBJECT: PROBLEMS IN PROGRAMMING VISIT TO PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

FROM LOWENSTEIN FOR BARBOUR (EUR/WE)

1. AT EUR/WE'S REQUEST, EMBASSY ATTEMPTED TO INCLUDE IN DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LOWENSTEIN'S PROGRAM A VISIT TO A PROVINCIAL CAPITAL NEAR ROME TO OBSERVE FUNCTIONING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, EUR/WE SUGGESTED THAT MR. LOWENSTEIN SHOULD MEET WITH PREFECT, REGIONAL CARABINIERE COMMANDER AND MAYOR. FOR REASONS OF DISTANCE, POLITICAL AFFILIATION OF MAYOR AND LOCAL GIUNTA, AND QUALITY OF REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION, AQUILA WAS SELECTED AS CITY TO BE VISITED ON JUNE 4. SINCE OUR EXPERIENCE IS THAT PERFECT AND CARABINIERE COMMANDER WOULD NOT COOPERATE IN VISIT OF FOREIGN VIP (NOT ACCREDITED TO ITALY) WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION FROM THEIR HEADQUARTERS, EMBASSY CONTACTED MINISTRY OF INTERIOR MAY 22 TO EXPLAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT AND TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS THEREFOR. INTERIOR MINISTRY WAS COOPERATIVE AND ASSURED EMBASSY PROGRAM FOR VISIT BEING ARRANGED AS REQUESTED. MINISTRY TOLD US THAT PREFECT WOULD ARRANGE TO INCLUDE MAYOR AND PRESIDENT OF REGIONAL GIUNTA IN SCHEDULE FOR VISIT.

2. ON MAY 31 (SATURDAY), SHORTLY PRIOR TO CLOSING, INTERIOR MINISTRY INFORMED EMBASSY THAT PRO FORMA CLEARANCE FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR SUCH A HIGH-RANKING VISITOR. EMBASSY IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED FOREIGN MINISTRY PROTOCOL SECTION DUTY OFFICER. HE STATED THAT, BECAUSE OF LONG HOLIDAY

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ROME 08166 070951Z

WEEKEND, HE COULD NOT COMMUNICATE CLEARANCE TO INTERIOR MINISTRY

BEFORE MORNING OF JUNE 3, ADDING THAT HE DID NOT FORESEE ANY DIFFICULTY. MFA PROTOCOL OFFICER SUBSEQUENTLY CALLED BACK LATE AFTERNOON SATURDAY TO SAY THAT, IN ADDITION TO FOREIGN MINISTRY CLEARANCE, CLEARANCE FROM PROTOCOL SECTION OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE WOULD ALSO BE NECESSARY BECAUSE OF HIGH RANK OF FOREIGN VIP. HE ADDED THAT REQUEST COULD NOT BE SUBMITTED TO PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE BEFORE MORNING JUNE 3, I.E., MORNING OF PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL IN ROME.

3. ALTHOUGH FOREIGN MINISTRY PROTOCOL SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT CLEARANCE WOULD BE OBTAINED FROM PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE ON JUNE 3, EMBASSY DECIDED TO WITHDRAW REQUEST TO AVOID LAST MINUTE UNCERTAINTIES IN MR. LOWENSTEIN'S SCHEDULE AND TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY OF DISCORD WITH THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE DURING THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. INTERIOR MINISTRY NOTIFIED OF EMBASSY DECISION ON OPENING OF BUSINESS JUNE 3. MR. LOWENSTEIN WAS REPROGRAMMED FOR APPOINTMENTS WITH POLITICAL LEADERS AND JOURNALISTS IN ROME.

4. COMMENT: BUREAUCRATIC SNAFU LEADING TO EMBASSY DECISION TO CANCEL L'AQUILA VISIT APPARENTLY DUE TO (1) LAST MINUTE AWAKENING OF INTERIOR MINISTRY TO EXISTENCE OF ITALIAN PROTOCOL REGULATIONS MAKING FOREIGN MINISTRY CLEARANCE NECESSARY, AND (2) FOREIGN MINISTRY DECISION THAT MR. LOWENSTEIN'S RANK CALLED FOR CLEARANCE FROM PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. BEHIND THIS LATTER ELEMENT, THE JUNE 15 ELECTIONS HAVE PROBABLY INCREASED SENSITIVITY, BECAUSE OF CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE USE BY OPPONENTS OF FACT THAT HIGH RANKING USG OFFICIAL TOURING REGION AT TIME WHEN ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN FULL SWING. ANOTHER FACTOR THAT MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WAS LOCAL POLITICAL SHAKE-UP IN AQUILA JUNE 2. VOLPE

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